

CHAPTER 6: INCIDENT FIRE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT (IFPM) STANDARDS AND GUIDE

Background

Studies of wildland fire incidents for a number of years highlighted the fact that more stringent, uniform qualification standards were needed for certain fire management positions to ensure firefighter safety. Lengthy collaborative efforts between the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture to establish uniform fire management qualifications standards have been ongoing.

Following the South Canyon Fire in 1994, an interagency team was formed to investigate the fatalities and contributing factors. The subsequent *1995 Federal Wildland Fire Policy and Program Review*, signed by both Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, directed federal wildland fire agencies to establish fire management qualifications standards to improve firefighter safety and increase professionalism in fire management programs.

The Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Task Group, empowered by the Federal Fire and Aviation Leadership Council (now called the NFAEB—National Fire and Aviation Executive Board), developed the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standard and Guide (IFPM) that identifies minimum qualifications standards and competencies for key fire management positions.

The key fire management positions are:

- Interagency Hotshot Crew Superintendent (technical)
- Helicopter Manager (technical)
- Senior Firefighter (technical)
- Engine Module Supervisor (technical)
- Supervisory Fire Engine Operator (technical)
- Initial Attack Dispatcher (technical)
- Wildland Fire Operations Specialist (professional or technical)
- Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist (professional or technical)
- Prevention and Education Specialist (professional or technical)
- Initial Attack Lead Dispatcher/Assistant Center Manager (technical)
- Center Manager (professional or technical)
- Unit Fire Program Manager (professional)
- Geographic Area Fire Program Manager (professional)
- National Fire Program Manager (professional)

The IFPM minimum qualifications standards have been accepted by all federal agencies with wildland fire management responsibilities and the Office of Personnel Management.

Minimum qualifications standards which must be met by October 1, 2009, include:

- Additional Required Training
- Specialized Experience
- NWCG Incident Management Qualifications
- And in some cases, Positive Education applicable to the GS-0401

Competencies which must be met within three years after the incumbent has met the minimum qualifications standards include:

- Common competency descriptors
- Competency descriptors for specific IFPM position

The Department of Interior's *Implementation of the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide (IFPM Standard)* memorandum and the "U.S. Department of Agriculture/U.S. Department of the Interior Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide: White Paper" establishes uniform fire management qualifications standards to improve firefighter safety and increase professionalism in fire management programs.

The bulletin from the Bureau of Land Management Office of Fire and Aviation supports the Department of the Interior's memorandum (Refer to Director's Office Information Bulletin No. OF&A 2004-013 at <http://web.blm.gov/internal/fire/Directives/ib2004.htm>).

The "Interagency Fire Program Management Standards and Guide Implementation Plan" and supporting documents are to be used during the implementation of the IFPM Standard.

See <http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/> for the documents mentioned above as well as other information.

Implementation of IFPM

There are many steps and personnel involved with the implementation of IFPM. Some people designated as training leads will be involved with more of the implementation steps, but the most common steps in which training officers will be involved are Steps 5 and 6.

Step 5: Assessing Employee Development Needs – The employee's developmental needs must be assessed to determine what is needed in order for him/her to meet the goals outlined in the IFPM Standard. This assessment will serve as the basis for Step 6.

Step 6: Initiate Individual Development Plans (IDPs) – An IDP must be developed to meet the requirements found in the IFPM for the employee's current position. An IDP template can be found on the IFPM Web site, in Appendix F.

<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/implementation/implementationplan/AppendixF-IDPTemplate.pdf>

Course Schedule Planning – Taking the assessed needs for training, the training personnel/officer will develop a course schedule to accommodate the needs of the IFPM incumbents.

Additional IFPM Resources

IFPM Position Matrix

The IFPM Position Matrix (<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/implementation/IFPMmatrix.pdf>) provides minimum qualification information for all key fire management positions.

Position Planning Tool

The Position Planning Tools (<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/implementation/planningtools.htm>) describe some of the developmental activities an employee can use to achieve the requisite competencies for his/her position. The planning tools should be used during the IDP process.

Competency/Specialized Experience Documentation

Each position has specific specialized experience requirements. Each State Office should set up a process for gaining these specialized experience requirements for their employees.

Eventually the competency portion of the IFPM will be tracked in documents similar to an NWCG Position Task Books. These documents are currently under development. In the meantime, employees should track the accomplishment of those competencies using a copy of the competencies within the appropriate IFPM position section. The supervisor will initial and date the line of the corresponding competency as they are met.

NWCG and Agency Training Requirements

Each position has specific developmental training requirements. An employee will need to be placed on the priority list (developed by their home unit) for receiving NWCG training and also be provided opportunities to take agency-related training as applicable to their position. This should be their key training-related concern, foregoing other training if conflict in schedule arises or budgetary constraints exist.

NWCG Fire Training and Incident Qualifications Worksheets

Each position has specific incident management qualification requirements. An employee will need to be placed on the priority list (developed by their home unit) for receiving trainee assignments. Their supervisor should make them available to get this accomplished.

The Incident Qualifications Worksheets can be used to assess an employee's NWCG training and incident qualifications to aid in the development of an IDP.

NOTE: Some positions have more than one worksheet; select the worksheet that corresponds to the complexity of the fire program in which the employee works. Refer to the IFPM Web site (<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/implementation/nwcgworksheets.htm>) to download the appropriate worksheet.

Additional Considerations

Positive Educational Component of the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist Series

Some Training Officers may be expected to assist employees with the planning of coursework to enable employees to meet the GS-0401 series. If this is the case, the Training Officer must work closely with Human Resources personnel to ensure that the coursework meets the requirements of the GS-0401 supplemental standard. Information on the Supplemental Standard and some of the NWCG and agency-sponsored courses can be found at:

http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/documents/GS-0401Supplemental_Qualification_Standard_w-Attachments_July_2005.pdf

Another source for information that the Training Officer will find useful in helping employees understand course work requirements and classes that meet the Supplemental Qualification Standard is a Memorandum "Policy Interpretation of the Supplemental Qualifications Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist." This memo can be found at:

<http://www.fire.blm.gov/training/blmtrng/PDFs/UNLV/Policyjune2705.pdf>

Future Considerations

Requesting Additional Courses

Training personnel can request review of coursework that would meet the intent of the GS-0401 Series. Information regarding this process can be found in Appendix A of the IFPM Implementation Plan,

<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/implementation/implementationplan/AppendixA-StandingBoards.pdf>

Documentation System for IFPM Standards

A group is currently working on the interagency system that will maintain the IFPM records. The system will be IQCS, with additional functionality for IFPM. Refer to the IFPM and IQCS Web sites (<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov> and <http://iqcs.nwcg.gov/>, respectively) for the current status.

Changes to IFPM Standard and Implementation Plan

Refer periodically to the IFPM Web site (<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/newdevelopments.htm>) for updates or changes to the IFPM Standard or Implementation Plan.

Funding

The *Interagency Fire Program Management Standards and Guide Implementation Plan* states, “It is the responsibility of each bureau or agency to ensure **every** employee affected by the *IFPM Standard* meets the minimum qualification standards by October 1, 2009. This includes paying for training and associated costs as well as providing employees with work time to complete the training.”

BLM State Offices and National Centers should develop a new project code to track all IFPM Standard activities (e.g., wages, training and educational costs, mentoring and coaching activities, travel and per diem). This will assist management in tracking the costs of implementing this program.

IFPM Resolutions Board

The IFPM Resolutions Board has been tasked to develop and implement a comprehensive review process to resolve disputed qualification issues. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), the DOI Office of Wildland Fire Coordination, and one of the national fire directors will be represented in this process.

The Board will accomplish the following objectives:

- Develop a standard process/template for field users to submit a request to the Board.
- Establish Board procedures for reviewing employee’s education and experience to determine eligibility for the position in question.
- Establish procedures for providing findings to the employees, supervisor, and human resource specialists.
- Propose revisions and updates to the IFPM Standard and Guide.

GS-401 Education/Training Assessment Board

The GS-401 Education/Training Assessment Board (Assessment Board), formed by the Interagency Fire Program Management Implementation Team, has been tasked to develop and implement a review process which would allow expansion or modification of Other Education Creditable toward the 24 Semester Hours Requirement for the Supplemental Qualification Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist Position. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service will be represented in this process.

The Assessment Board will accomplish the following objectives:

- Establish protocols for a permanent (standing) group for the Supplemental Qualification Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist, Other Education Creditable toward the 24 Semester Hours Requirement component. This component includes only education obtained from other than an accredited institute of higher learning, such as National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) courses listed in the Supplemental Qualification Standard.
- Establish procedures for reviewing coursework to determine if the course meets the criteria established by the Office of Personnel Management for the GS-0401 series.
- Develop a standard process/template for field users to submit a course assessment request to the Assessment Board.
- Form and maintain a panel of college professors who specialize in wildland fire education as stated in the Supplemental Qualification Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist for the purpose of making course assessments.
- Maintain partnerships between the federal agencies and colleges/universities that may provide assistance in the review of courses that are being considered for the Supplemental Qualification Standard.
- Provide updated lists of courses to the Chair of the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board (NFAEB) for approval through the respective agencies' human resources and line management channels.
- Provide revisions and updates to the IFPM Implementation Team for submission in the IFPM Standard and Guide.
- Ensure updates to the IFPM Standard and Guide are readily available to the respective agencies' human resources and line management channels.